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ABSTRACT

Teachers who wish to change professions can use their skills in a new setting rather than take jobs in settings where their teaching competencies are of little use. This document provides a list of 29 professions where teaching takes place outside of traditional elementary secondary school buildings. The career of one teacher who left the school setting and found an alternative educational environment to practice her profession is examined through her responses to interview-type questions. Specifically, she describes her current position as coordinator of parent-child programs for the Mailman Family Center of Nova University, the advantages of this position over her previous public school teaching job, her experience and training, and the mental changes necessary to make this career shift. (CB)

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DON'T LEAVE TEACHING--

EXAMINE OTHER TEACHING RELATED CAREERS

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"BUT, ALL I CAN DO IS TEACH!"

There are several things wrong with that statement. The first and most important is the attitude it represents. Teaching is one of the more complicated tasks human beings design for themselves--it may even be the most difficult to do well. Many teachers are minimally competent at it, some are good, and only a very few are excellent. Teaching is complex, demands much from its practitioners and, most of all, the best teaching is rarely shared or appreciated. Others simply don't understand the subtleties involved in the profession. Some students realize how much they have received and how much the teacher had to give to them to accomplish what they did. But, very often, for teachers there is only a secret joy, the joy of having done a difficult job well. Yet, deep-down, you know good teaching is very special, and the fulfillment that comes from it is an important foundation of your life. You don't really want to give it up. If only people would honor you, recognize you, and give you the time and resources to work well at your profession. They really wouldn't have to pay you all that much; you would stay forever. But, they won't, usually, at least where you are. And each year the load is heavier, with fewer resources available. Yet, your profession is important and you really want an opportunity to do a good job in a place where others reward your competence.

Instead of the statement with which we opened this article, let us change it, and the attitude it belies. Think and say,

> *"I am a good teacher and therefore, I have the following skills...which I believe your organization will find very valuable. I want to use my skills in a setting which allows me to do my best work and one which also shows its appreciation of my abilities."*

Are you a mid-career teacher who has been teaching for three years, or ten, or twenty-five years or more? Over the years you have noticed that many of your colleagues have left the classroom for employment in settings where their teaching competencies are of little use. In short, they have given up on teaching as a career.

As you step back and observe what has happened to those persons who have left the classroom for positions which have little relationship to teaching, you may have concluded--"I'm different! I like teaching. I'm competent. But, I would like to apply my teaching skills in settings outside of the classroom and the K-12 school." If you have made a similar analysis of your career, you are aware that teaching as a profession need not be limited to the confines of either the classroom or school. Other readers may not yet have made the same insights as you regarding possible teaching careers in non-school settings. For those educators, we supply the following list of teaching careers in settings which differ from the typical classroom in K-12 schools:

* Teacher in a children's hospital
* Educator with police/fire department
* Educator for Lung Association/Heart Association
* Educator with McDonald's/Burger King
* Parent educator
* Inservice director in bank/industry/hospital
* Daycare director
* Head Start director

* Teacher in an alternative school
* Education director for Urban League/United Way
* Educational products salesperson who does in-service for teachers
* Teacher in an outdoor, environmental educational setting
* Teacher in a jail/juvenile detention center
* Teacher/director of an after-school program in a school, community center or day care center
* Physical education teacher in a community recreation center
* Writer of articles/books and workshop leader for parents on child rearing, teaching skills for parents, etc.
* Language teacher for Berlitz, industry, the armed services, etc
* Director of parent volunteers in a school/school district
* Team leader/department head
* Data collector for school related research
* Supervisor of student teachers and first year teachers
* Adult education teacher
* Designer of curriculum material
* Writer/musician for children's music
* Writer/producer/actor of children's programs on radio/TV/film
* Teacher/director of religious related educational programs
* Youth leader (scouts, community center)
* Lobbyist for educational organizations
* Teacher/director of a diagnostic/tutoring service.

You may be surprised at the large number of "teaching" positions. As you spend more time studying our list, other teaching

careers in non-school settings may come to your mind. You have begun the questioning of the 'regularities' which surround the work responsibilities of a 'teacher.' Regularities are those patterns of behaviors which one follows without questioning the 'whys' for the behavior. For example, you wanted to become a teacher. The accepted pattern for becoming a teacher (i.e. 'regularity') was to study education at the undergraduate or graduate level with the sole intention of pursuing a teaching position within a school building that housed elementary school or middle school or high school students. Very few of us who became teachers during the past two decades ever questioned the regularity regarding the location for practicing our skills. It was assumed to be a school which opened its doors at 8:30 a.m. and closed them at 3:30 p.m.

We want to introduce you to one teacher who left the K-12 school and found an alternative educational environment to practice her profession. Sherry Manburg was chosen since her responses fit into the patterns established by numerous teachers who are working in settings which differ from the typical K-12 organization.

* *

Name: Sherry Manburg

(Photo)

Title: Coordinator of Parent-Child Programs

Agency: The Mailman Family Center of Nova University

Years in Position: Two

Educational Background: B.A. in Education
M.S. in Education

Prior Experience: Elementary School Teaching and Pre-School Director

I. "Describe your organization and your responsibilities within the organization."

"The Mailman Family Center focuses on a wide array of needs for the family--parent and child programs (age 2 months through 3½ years), kindergarten and pre-school readiness programs, tutoring and enrichment for learning disabled and gifted children in addition to family counseling. My position, Coordinator of Parent-Child Programs, involves me with numerous tasks:

* Supervising the teachers who lead the parent and children classes
* Writing curriculum for the children and parents
* Training the teachers
* Serving as a liaison between the parents and teachers
* Teaching three classes per week (approximately 5 hours)
* Assisting with the design of the learning environment, layout and selection of learning materials.
* Scheduling the classes and times for the 500 plus parents and children
* Developing systems for tuition payments and registration."

II. "What special training did you need for the position (beyond teacher preparation?)"

"Most of my special training for this position was quite informal. I began to see how children learn and feel through my elementary school teaching experiences. Throughout my career, I have been concerned about my own professional growth. Therefore, I read continually on child/parent related topics. In addition, I try to attend workshops within my region. The Director of the Family Center is well known throughout the country (Dr. Marilyn Segal) and I have learned much about parents and children during

staff meetings led by Dr. Segal and from her well-known books on children's development.

I helped to establish a nursery school from scratch. From that experience, I learned about the budget process and how to supervise adults. I must admit that my best training program began the day my first child was born; parenthood forced me to understand the relationship between the theory of child development with the real world of children."

III. "What skills did you have as a teacher which help you now in your present position?"

"I have been able to apply all of my teaching skills as a teacher of pre-school through elementary school to my present position as coordinator. Allow me to list a few of these skills:

* Sensitivity to how children learn and develop;

* Understanding of the wide array of parent concerns. As a teacher involved in open education in New York City during the 1970's, I had to keep parents up-to-date on the 'whys' and 'hows' of open education;

* Utilization of my musical ability. I found that music is a vehicle for turning on children's natural curiosity and feelings. My studies at a music conservatory helped me to develop my abilities as a songwriter and song leader for children;

* Ability to manage complex environments. Good teachers are natural managers. As a teacher, I had to coordinate concurrent activities within the classroom and complete the numerous bureaucratic tasks asked of me by the school. The management skills I acquired in the classroom are applied every day as I manage the multiple needs of children, parents and professional staff."

IV. "What advantages/disadvantages are there in your present position as compared to teaching in a school setting?"

"The disadvantages of my Coordinator position are few;

the advantages are many. Teachers in K-12 classrooms are rarely observed by other adults. Given the nature of my program, I am in constant touch with adults, and on occasion, I feel as though I'm in a "fishbowl" being observed by numerous sets of adult eyes. On a day-to-day basis, I find the involvement with parents to be the most exciting aspect of my job. Sorry for having so few disadvantages and viewing the one disadvantage as a plus.

Are you sure you have time to listen to <u>all</u> of the pluses of my job? Okay, here they are:

* Freedom to write the curriculum and to design learning environments
* Opportunities to write for publication
* As a working parent, I can bring my child to work and involve him in my program.
* Access to the most current material in early childhood
* There is a feeling of prestige about my position. Since the Family Center is such a unique institution, we are being visited by the top names in early childhood and child psychology
* Quality innovation receives much praise from all staff in the Family Center."

V. "Why did you make the change to your present position?"

"I taught public school for five years. After our first child was born, I went into a brief "retirement" period from paid employment. This new job, parenting, was the best preparation for my current position. After a sabbatical of two years from paid employment, I was asked to establish and direct a nursery school. My current super-

visor heard about my nursery school, and after observing the program, asked me to join the staff of the Family Center, first as a teacher and then as a Coordinator. It seems to me that I did not make a sudden break from the elementary school classroom--events just evolved from one step to the next."

VI. "How long did you prepare 'mentally' for the change?"

"The change, as I mentioned to you, seemed to evolve naturally. I did not make a traumatic decision to leave the K-12 classroom for this new type of learning environment."

VII. "What were the reactions of your family and colleagues to the change?"

"My husband and I are used to changes in our professional lives. Our most dramatic change was one that took me from the classroom and him from an administrative position in an elementary school to a one year sabbatical, where we focused on the 'career' of being new parents."

VIII. "What types of personality characteristics are needed to make the change?"

"Many of my friends are leaving the K-12 classroom because their jobs no longer exist. Other friends have made the move from K-12 teaching positions to teaching positions outside the typical schools. These persons had to be:

* Risk takers
* Turned-on by the new and uncomfortable situations
* Concerned with the future and can 'feel' where new opportunities exist."

IX. "What advice would you give to a classroom teacher who is thinking about teaching in a non-school environment?"

"Teachers should remember that they have many skills. The skills that I developed as a classroom teacher--planning, management, how to give feedback--are necessary in <u>all</u> learning environments. Don't think of yourself as 'just a classroom teacher.' Sell your skills, brag about your skills, be assertive."

* *

You now have a new framework for viewing the profession of teaching. If you are committed to this profession and decide to leave the K-12 environment (or are forced to leave the environment due to diminished enrollment), examine the numerous teaching possibilities within your region. Lawyers are not limited to the courtroom, nurses practice their profession in a variety of settings and you, as a teacher, can seek a new career within the boundaries of education.